

From: Veronica Butcher [veronica@harmonizingstrategies.com]
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Why I'm Spending three days outside Governor Cooper's offices

My name is Tom Clark. I live on land that has been part of my family's farm in Cumberland county near Fayetteville for generations. As a child I played on this land, and helped my grandfather with growing tobacco and other farm work. The land is beautiful, and I cherish it like family. To see it damaged is like having a part of my body torn apart.

A year or so ago we learned that the Duke and Dominion are planning to install a 36" fracked gas pipeline, carrying 1.5 billion cubic feet of gas a day under 1400 pounds per square inch pressure through our family's farm. This gas will come all the way from West Virginia, and is probably going to Savannah, Georgia for export to China. The pipeline will pass within a hundred yards of our house. I live on that farm with my wife Sandy and our horses, goats, ponies and chickens. If there were a leak in the pipeline, we live well within the blast zone, and we could all be incinerated. I worry about this every day.

But equally bad, and of more immediate concern, is the fact that loggers hired by Duke and Dominion recently came onto the farm without notice, and even though they do not have all the permits required to install the pipeline, cut down several trees in the pipeline's proposed path. One of those trees is a pine tree which I consider a grandfather. It has been there ever since I was a boy. It was 100 feet tall and shaded a large area, including a stream and a pond nearby. It broke my heart to see it cut. I tried repeatedly to talk to the loggers and tell them how important the land and the tree were to me. I even stood in their way, and they were forced to leave. But they returned a couple of days later and finished their dirty work. Now a month later the tree's dead body still lies on the ground because Duke and a Dominion need additional permits which they don't yet have to remove it. Meanwhile it's a continuing reminder to me to the sacrilege being committed and the danger we face. If for some reason the ACP is not built, those trees, including that grandfather, will have been felled and killed for no reason.

I'm spending these three days in front of the Governor's Office so people in Raleigh, and the Governor and his staff, can learn about what we who live in the path of this dangerous and dirty pipeline are dealing with and the tragedies we are facing. The Governor has the power to reverse the state's support for the ACP, whose gas is not needed; whose operations will endanger and disrupt the lives of tens of thousands of North Carolina residents; and which ultimately will increase the likelihood of catastrophic climate change, which Governor Cooper has pledged to work against.

Governor Cooper has recently opposed offshore drilling and stood up to protect the beaches and the people who live on the coast of north Carolina. He has said he will work to promote the Paris Climate accords. How then can he in good conscience help to permit the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which is at least as harmful as offshore drilling?

Governor Cooper, please stand up to Duke and Dominion, and suspend the permits for the ACP.

Tom Clark